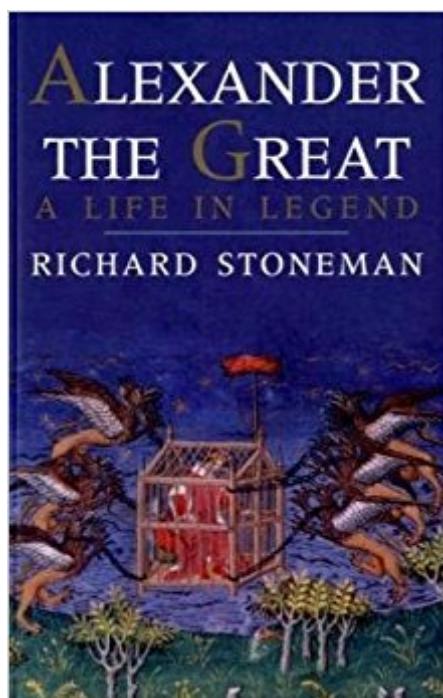


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Alexander The Great: A Life In Legend



Synopsis

Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) precipitated immense historical change in the Mediterranean and Near Eastern worlds. But the resonance his legend achieved over the next two millennia stretched even farther—across foreign cultures, religious traditions, and distant nations. This engaging and handsomely illustrated book for the first time gathers together hundreds of the colorful Alexander legends that have been told and retold around the globe. Richard Stoneman, a foremost expert on the Alexander myths, introduces us first to the historical Alexander and then to the Alexander of legend, an unparalleled mythic icon who came to represent the heroic ideal in cultures from Egypt to Iceland, from Britain to Malaya. Alexander came to embody the concerns of Hellenistic man; he fueled Roman ideas on tyranny and kingship; he was a talisman for fourth-century pagans and a hero of chivalry in the early Middle Ages. He appears in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic writings, frequently as a prophet of God. Whether battling winged foxes or meeting with the sun, descending to the underworld or inventing the world's first diving bell, Alexander inspired as a hero, even a god. Stoneman traces Alexander's influence in ancient literature and folklore and in later literatures of east and west. His book provides the definitive account of the legends of Alexander the Great—a powerful leader in life and an even more powerful figure in the history of literature and ideas.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Who was Alexander? An unsympathetic, cursory reading of the bare facts could paint him as a

megalomaniac whose character was warped by his dysfunctional family. Of course, there are other perceptions of him: he was a military genius with a rare vision of uniting the Persian and Greek worlds; he was a romantic and chivalrous conqueror with a gift for winning over enemies with grand gestures. These perceptions are largely the result of a sustained process of mythmaking, which was initiated by Alexander himself and continued for centuries after his death. Stoneman, a classicist, has examined the sources and processes that created these myths in a well-written and beautifully illustrated book. He shows how various cultures—Egyptian, Persian, British, and Greek—adopted, modified, and exaggerated historical sources to create their own versions of Alexander to suit their concepts of the heroic ideal. This is an unusual and thought-provoking book that should appeal to both Alexander buffs and well-informed general readers. --Jay Freeman
--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"This is an unusual and thought-provoking book that should appeal to both Alexander buffs and well-informed general readers."•Booklist (Booklist 2008-04-01)"The volume is highly informative in its goal of tracing the evolution of thought about Alexander through the centuries."•Dawn L. Gilley, Bryn Mawr Classical Review (Dawn L. Gilley Bryn Mawr Classical Review 2008-09-19)"The first full-scale study in over 50 years of the Alexander Romance and its legacy in English. . . . Particularly interesting is the author's discussion of the rich medieval Persian Alexander literature—both Zoroastrian and Islamic—and its influence. This fascinating book belongs in every university and college library Essential."•Choice (Choice 2008-12-01)

Richard Stoneman has probably done more research on the huge legacy of Alexander than anyone. Since the beginning, historians were writing down every move he made—he had his own personal historian. When he died, there were numerous books written about his campaign across Asia. Soon however, people were telling stories about things that he didn't actually do and places he never got to. The demand for Alexander stories actually grew after his death—he was the ultimate hero. Alexander took Hercules example to heart and always did the right thing--except when he didn't. But his failures simply reminded that although he was the son of a god (zeus ammon) he was also human. The fantastical stories were written down into what is called, "The Alexander Romance." Stoneman is the expert on it, and it is also a great read--you should perhaps read it before this one. Around the first century, four more major biographies were written; they were called the "Vulgate" tradition. The resurgence of interest in Alex's exploits continued well into the Dark

Ages. Also his fame spread throughout Asia, and there is even a Muslim tradition. One more thing, you should read at least one version of Plutarch's "Alexander" to understand his basic biography. That is available free online. When you become an expert on all things Alexander, you will be innately satisfied but also should come back and give a review here on .

Richard Stoneman examines, not the actual life of Alexander, but his afterlife in the legends of a wide variety of cultures. The book is both scholarly and entertaining, and seductive just to dip into. The tales themselves are fascinating. If you've ever wondered about the many works of art, cropping up in unexpected places (and well illustrated here), showing Alexander exploring the deep in a diving bell, or ascending into the sky in a flying machine drawn by winged griffins, or encountering the oracular tree of heads, this will furnish an explanation. An essential for those interested in Alexander, or in ancient history and its effects on the later imagination, or in the genesis of comparative legend and folklore.

Excellent book on Alexander The Great ~ very informative.

Reading this book, I answered my old question, why for some Alexander was Great (even a Prophet) and for others a monster seeking for blood and gold.

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